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THE
AFFECTING HISTORY
OF
CAROLINE;
OR, THE
DISTRESSED WIDOW.

A TRUE TALE.



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CAROLINE;

OR, THE

DISTRESSED WIDOW.



MY father was a native of Scotland, of the noble family of Douglas. He was a younger brother of a younger branch, and married very early in his life a young woman as well born, and as indigent as himself. In the year 1745, he was among those who joined the unfortunate Charles-Edward; and he fell at Culloden, leaving me then about twenty months old, and his wife, then not more than seventeen, entirely dependant on the bounty of his father, and overwhelmed with the greatness of her calamity; but when she held in her arms her unfortunate orphan, the sole legacy and sole memorial of a man she had fondly loved, she struggled against her unhappy destiny, and for my sake attempted to live.

Though peace was at length restored to the wretched country; which had been too long the seat of devastation, many families found themselves totally impoverished; and none had suffered more than my grandfather, who having narrowly escaped with life, survived to lament the loss of three brave sons, and to see great part of his property in ashes. He lingered only a twelvemonth afterwards, and

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then sunk into the grave, leaving his small patrimony to his only surviving son, who had himself a numerous family. My mother saw, or fancied she saw, that he could willingly have dispensed with any additional burthen; and she determined to go to England, where she hoped to be received by a brother of her own who was settled in London. Thither she conveyed herself and me in the cheapest way she could, and was received by her brother (who had sunk his illustrious birth for the convenience offered him of becoming partner with a merchant) with kindness indeed; but such kindness as a mind, narrowed by perpetually contemplating riches, shews to the poor who are dependant on them. His wife, by whose means his fortune had been promoted, convinced him that his sister and her child could not be commodiously received into his house. Lodgings were however provided for her in the neighbourhood, and she boarded with her brother: but the second month of her thus living was not passed, before the neglect she felt from him, and the pride and ill-nature of his wife, taught her to experience, in all its bitterness, the misery of dependence. Born with very acute feelings, and at an age when every sensibility is awake, my mother found this situation every day more insupportable. Yet whither could she turn? She had neither knowledge of business, nor any means of engaging in it. She had no acquaintance in England, and not in the world any friend who had at once the power and the will to assist her.

Almost the first circumstance which made any impression on my mind, was the agonies of passion with which my mother clasped me to her bosom, and wept over me, while she called on the spirit of her departed Douglas to behold the wretchedness of his widow and his orphan. At that age, however, it is only a slight sketch now and then of some violent passion, or striking circumstance, that rests on the memory of an infant. I have no recol-

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lection of any thing else till the scene was greatly changed, and, in my childish eyes, greatly amended.

It was summer, and though at that period the mercantile inhabitants of London were less accustomed than they now are to go to country villas, yet my uncle, who was growing rich, had one near Hammersmith, where he usually repaired with his family on Fridays, returning to town again the beginning of the following week. The weather was uncommonly hot, and my mother, who was never of these parties, but was left in London to share the dinner of a solitary servant who took care of the house, fancied that I had for many days drooped for want of air; and alarmed by that idea, she took, after the family were gone, an hackney coach, and directed it to carry her to the gate of Hyde Park.

Though the sun was declining, it had yet so much power, that in walking through the park with me in her arms, that I at least might not suffer, she became extremely fatigued. She saw people going into Kensington gardens: thither she went also; and to avoid observation, betook herself to an unfrequented part of them, where, quite overcome with bodily fatigue and mental anguish, she threw herself on a seat, and, straining me to her bosom, began with a torrent of tears to lament, not so much her own hard fate, as that which awaited the infant of her lost Douglas, whose name she frequently repeated, broken by the sobs and groans which a thousand tender recollections of him, and poignant fears for me, extorted from her. From this delirium of fruitless sorrow she was awakened by the appearance of a gentleman, of about thirty, who suddenly approached her, and enquired with great politeness, yet with great warmth, whether her distress was of a nature which he could mitigate or remove?

Alarmed by this address from a stranger, my mother arose, and making an effort to conquer her emotion and conceal her tears, she thanked him in an hurried voice for

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his politeness, but assured him that she was merely fatigued by the heat of the weather, and should now hasten home.

He was not however to be so easily shaken off. If my mother had at first sight struck him as a very beautiful young woman, he was still more charmed when she spoke, and when amidst the confusion she was under, he observed as much unaffected modesty as natural elegance. It was in vain that she intreated him to leave her, and assured him that she lived in a very distant part of the town with a brother, into whose house she could not introduce a stranger, and that she should be otherwise much distressed by his attention. He would not leave her; but taking me up in his arms, he carried me out of the gardens, and then delivering me to my mother, he ran towards the palace to procure, as he said, a coach. My mother, who trembled she knew not why, at the politeness she could not resent, now hurried on in the hope of escaping from her new acquaintance; but she had not proceeded an hundred paces before he was again at her side, and again took me in his arms, and under pretence that there was no coach to be had where he had been, but that one would probably be met with if they walked on, he engaged her to proceed, till a coach overtook them, not such as he pretended to have sought, but one on which was an earl's coronet, and the arms of Douglas, quartered with those of an illustrious English family.

"Now," said he, stopping as it came up, "here is a carriage which shall convey you and this little cherub to your home. You will not, I think, refuse me the honour of accompanying you, that it may afterwards take me to mine."

Again my mother urged every thing she could think of to prevail upon her new friend to desist from a proof of attention which could only distress her. He would hear nothing; and the warmth of his importunity forced her,

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in spite of every objection, to get into his coach, where he seated me in her lap, and himself by her side.

He then attempted to quiet her fears, by entering into discourse on the topics of the day; in which he exerted himself so effectually, his manners were so easy and his conversation so entertaining, that the agitation of her spirits gradually subsided. The soothing voice of friendship, of pity, of sympathy, which she had not heard for many, many months, again made its way to her heart; and when he insensibly turned the discourse from less interesting matters to her own condition, the tears flowed from her eyes, softness pervaded her heart, and she confided to this stranger, whom she had not yet known above an hour, the unhappy uncertainty of her situation, the actual misery she suffered herself, and the anguish which weighed down her spirit when she reflected she had no other portion to bequeath me than poverty, servitude, or perhaps dependence, more bitter than either. In making this avowal, she had named her family, and that of her father.

"Yes," interrupted her protector, "I heard, as I listened to you in the gardens, the name of Douglas. I am myself of the race; for my mother was a Douglas; such a circumstance added to the captivating beauty of the fair mourner to whom I listened, made my curiosity invincible. Dangerous curiosity! to gratify it, I have, I fear, lost my peace."

Not to dwell too long on the recital, let me say that this nobleman professed himself passionately in love with the young widow; and though she insisted on his giving up so wild an idea, he declared before he left her that he would by some means or other introduce himself to her brother, since to live without seeing her was impossible. It was with difficulty he was at length prevailed upon to leave the house: and without extorting permission from my mother, he was there again the next day, and every day till the family returned; after which he managed so

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adroitly, that in a few days he made himself acquainted with my uncle, and was in form invited to dinner; while neither himself or his wife at all suspected for whose sake the acquaintance was so anxiously cultivated, but were extremely elate at the notice which a man of rank took of them, and the compliments he paid to the respectability and intrinsic worth of men in business.

The attention however which he found himself obliged to pay to the mistress of the house, and the few opportunities of seeing or conversing with my mother, which this method of visiting allowed him, became very uneasy to him. And at length, after a long struggle with himself, he determined to hazard telling her his real situation. He probably knew that he had by this time secured such an interest in her heart, that it was no longer in her power to fly from him, whatever her honour might dictate. Having with some difficulty obtained an opportunity of speaking to her, he told her, that he knew she must long have seen his ardent and incurable passion; "which perhaps," continued he, "I ought never to have indulged; but alas! from the first moment I saw you, my heart was your's! while reason in vain condemned me, and repeated the fatal truth which you must now hear. I am already married—I am not villain enough to attempt to deceive you; but listen to what I have to add in extenuation of my conduct, before you condemn me to despair."

The indignation with which my mother received this acknowledgment, the attempts of her lover to appease and soften her, I need not relate: having at length prevailed on her to hear what he had to urge, he told her, that to gratify his family he had, when little more than twenty, married the heiress of a rich and noble family; plain, and even deformed in her person, with a temper soured by ill health and the consciousness of her own imperfections, and with manners the most disgusting. For upwards of three years he dragged on a life completely

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wretched with a woman whose malignity of temper deadened all pity for her personal misfortune: at the end of that period she was seized with the small pox, attended with the worst symptoms: but the distemper acting on an habit constitutionally bad, failed to deprive her of life, which would have been a blessing to them both; but left behind it violent eliptic fits, which, continuing with increasing violence for many months, had deprived her of the slender share of reason she ever possessed, and threw her at length into confirmed idiotism, in which state she had invariably remained for the last six years. Thus situated, he considered himself, though the fatal tie could not by law be dissolved, as really unmarried, and at liberty to offer his heart to the lovely object who now possessed it, though the cruel circumstance he had related made it impossible for him to offer her that rank, in which it would otherwise have been his ambition to have placed her, and to which she would have done so much honour.

I was then in my mother's arms: he took me tenderly in his, and said, "Intercede for me, lovely Caroline, with your mother! Ah! soften that dear, inexorable heart, and tell her, that for your sake she should quit an abode so unfit for you both, and accept the protection of a man, who will consider and provide for her Caroline as for a child of his own." He then hurried away, leaving a paper in which he had repeated all he had before said; and protesting that his first care should be to settle a fortune on me. That evening, my uncle and his family, who had been absent, returned, and it happened, that his wife, who was always rude and unfeeling, treated my mother with an unusual degree of asperity. Her brother too, whether from accident or some intelligence he had received of his lordship's visits, spoke to her with great acrimony, reproached her with having been now above twelve months a burthen to him, and advised her to try if she could not procure a place as companion to a lady, or governess in a

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family; adding coldly, that he would in that case take care of me, and put me out to nurse, till I was old enough to procure a livelihood.

Honour and respect for the memory of her husband, had made in the breast of my mother a struggle, which this inhuman treatment rendered at once ineffectual. On one side, affluence with the man whom she already loved, more than she was aware of, and a certain provision for the infant on whom she doated, awaited her; on the other, poverty, dependence, and contempt: her child torn from her, and herself sent to service. The contrast was too violent: she retired to her room, and without giving herself time for reflection, wrote to Lord Pevensey, and the next day quitting her inhospitable and selfish relations, without giving them any account of herself, she set out with his lordship for Paris. A servant was provided for me: all that love and fortune could offer were lavished on her; and at an elegant house on the banks of the Seine she was soon established; with a splendor which, however, served not to make her happy.

Still conscious of the impropriety of her situation, she could never conquer the melancholy that preyed on her mind, though she sometimes thought, that to have the daughter of Douglas educated and provided for, as his lordship's fondness educated and provided for me, was in reality a greater proof of attachment to his memory than she would have shewn had she suffered me to have remained in the indigence and disgrace to which the penurious and sordid temper of my uncle would have exposed me. The two sons, whom she brought my lord, shared her tenderness without lessening it; and while the utmost care was taken of their education, as soon as they were old enough to receive instruction, I had the best masters which Paris afforded; and, with such advantages, almost every European language, at an early age, became familiar to me. Lord Pevensey, who was as partial to me as if I had been

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indeed his daughter, and in whose fondness for my mother, time made no abatement, saw with pleasure the progress I made, and flattered himself that he should establish me happily, though the situation of my mother (who though she was treated in France with great respect, was well understood not to be the wife of Lord Pevensey,) was a very unfavourable circumstance to me even in that country. The world however called me handsome; and I had received an education very different from that which is usually given to young women in France. On the day on which I completed my fourteenth year, lord Pevensey came to me, as I was dressing for a little entertainment which he had ordered on the occasion, and wished me joy of my birth-day, he saluted me, and put into my hands a bank note of a thousand pounds. "Take it, my dear Caroline," said he, "as a trifling testimony of my affection for you. Use it for your smaller expenses, and be assured that I will not neglect to make your future prospects equal to the education you have received, and to which you do so much honour."

I received this generosity as I ought. Alas! my benefactor went in a few weeks to England, and I saw him no more. A strange presentiment of evil hung over my mother, whose health had long been very uncertain. She could not bear to take the last leave of his lordship; and he, who lived but to oblige her, still lingered, and delayed his journey, till repeated letters from those who had the care of his estates compelled him to determine on it. His two sons one of ten, the other of eight years old, were by this time at a public school in England, and he promised to gratify my mother with the sight of them on his return, which he said should be as soon as he could settle the affairs which called him over.

When he was gone, however, my mother fell into a deep melancholy; and as we were almost always alone together, she talked very frequently of the incidents of her

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past life, related the particulars I have repeated to you, and asked me whether I could forgive her for having thus been betrayed into a situation, which, whatever it might be in the sight of heaven, would, in that of the world, render me liable to eternal reproach. It was in vain I conjured her to banish from her mind, reflections which served only to destroy an health so precious to us all. Still they recurred too often and her delicate constitution very visibly suffered. After lord Pevensey, who had been used to write by every post, had been gone six weeks, his letters suddenly ceased. My mother for some days flattered herself, that it was merely owing to his being on his journey back; but her hope gradually died away, and the most alarming apprehensions succeeded—apprehensions too well founded. We were sitting together one morning, when a sudden bustle of the servants in the anti-room surprised us. I arose to enquire into the occasion of it, and, on my opening the door, was shocked by the sight of my two brothers, and their tutor, who had been attempting to prevent their sudden entrance. The poor boys on seeing me burst into tears, and exclaiming, “Oh! Caroline! my father!” They rushed by me, and threw themselves into the arms of their mother; who, wild with terror, had no power to enquire, what indeed they soon told her.—“Oh mamma!” cried they, “our papa, our papa, our dear papa is dead! They have sent us here to you—they have taken him from us, and every thing that was his!”

The tutor, who highly respected my mother, now attempted to take the children from her: but she held them in her arms, while, with a look which I shall never forget, and with the voice of piercing anguish, she enquired what all this meant? The worthy man related, in a few words, that lord Pevensey had been seized with a fever at one of his country houses, where, after a few days illness, he died: that his brother, who became heir to his title, had instantly possessed himself of all his effects, and had di-

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rected the two boys to be taken immediately to France, and to drop the name they had hitherto borne. With reluctance the tutor added, that the present lord intended in a few days being at the house we inhabited, in order to receive the jewels and other valuables which belonged to his brother.

No tear fell from the eyes of the dear unhappy woman, no sigh escaped her heart. She desired me to tranquillize the poor boys (who still fondly clung round her, weeping for their dead papa), and complaining that she suffered great pain in her head, desired to be put to bed. I remained by her, and endeavoured to excite her tears, while mine flowed incessantly; but the greatness and suddenness of the calamity overwhelmed her constitution, though it still left to her mind strength enough to reflect on the condition of her children.

“Caroline,” said she to me as I sat by her, “I shall probably be in a few hours reduced to that indigence, from which, perhaps, it were better I had never been relieved. But your brothers! for them, I suffer! The proceedings of the present lord Pevensey leave me little reason to hope that any will exists in England which secures them the ample provision their father designed for them. There are, in a box which my Lord left, several papers which he told me were of consequence: but they will be taken from me unless immediately secured. Send therefore for Mr. Montgomery, and deliver to him that box.”

She then gave me a direction to him. I had never seen Mr. Montgomery, though he was a friend of my lord's. I hastened to execute her commands; he flew to the house on receiving my message; and, instead of a man of business as I expected, I beheld a young man of about seven and twenty, in the uniform of one of those Scottish regiments which were received by the king of France, after their master's affairs became irretrievable. He had been quartered for some time in a remote province; but being dis-

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tantly related to, and highly esteemed by the late lord Pevensey, he had constantly corresponded with him, and had been entrusted with his intentions relative to my mother, my brothers, and myself.

I cannot describe the person of Montgomery. Suffice it to say, that his figure was even finer than that of his son, who resembles him extremely. The warm and lively interest he took for my mother, the manly tenderness which he discovered, when he saw our distress, and the trouble which he instantly undertook to encounter for us, were powerful incentives for me to admire and esteem him. I then thought him the noblest of human beings, and a few days convinced me that he deserved all the partiality my young heart had conceived for him. The new lord Pevensey, who intended to have reached my mother's house before she could have notice of his journey (and was prevented only by the zeal of the tutor who had the care of my brothers), arrived on the third day after she had received these fatal tidings. He was a man not much turned of forty, but with a harsh and stern countenance, a large heavy person, and a formal, cold manner. He brought with him a lawyer from England, and engaged another in France to accompany him to the house; where, with very little ceremony, he demanded of my mother all the jewels and effects of his deceased brother. Summoning all her resolution, and supported by Montgomery, who never left her, she tried to go through this dreadful ceremony with some degree of fortitude. She delivered, with trembling hands, a star, a sword set with brilliants, and several other family jewels. She then opened a casket, in which her own were inclosed, and lord Pevensey was taken them from her, when Montgomery interfered, saying that they were her's, and he should not suffer her to part with them.

It would be tedious to relate the scenes which passed between lord Pevensey, his lawyer, and Montgomery; who

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finding it necessary, engaged lawyers on the part of my mother. A will of the late Lord had been found among the papers which she had put in the possession of Montgomery, in which an annuity of eight hundred a year was settled on my mother, and all his estates charged with the payment of ten thousand pounds to each of my brothers, and two to me. This will the present lord disputed; and the contending parties prepared for law, the circumstance of the case rendering it necessary that this contention should be carried on as well in England as in France.

The spirits and health of my mother gradually declined. The friendship, the unwearied kindness of Montgomery, alone supported her: but neither his attention or mine could cure the malady of the mind, or bind up the wounds of a broken heart.

I will not detain you with relating the various expedients for accommodation, which were in the course of the first month proposed by the relations of the family, who knew the tenderness the late lord Pevensey had for my mother; that he considered her as his wife; and that her conduct could not have been more unexceptionable had she really been so. Still lingering in France, and still visiting an house into which his cruelty had introduced great misery, the proceedings of lord Pevensey wore a very extraordinary appearance. My mother was now confined almost intirely to her room; and Montgomery concealed from her his uneasiness at what he remarked; but to me he spoke more freely, and told me he was very sure his lordship had other designs than he suffered immediately to appear. In a few days the truth of this conjecture became evident. I was alone in a small room at the end of the house, where I had a harpsichord which I had removed thither since my mother's illness. She was asleep. Montgomery, on whom my imagination had long been accustomed to dwell with inexpressible delight, had been detained two days from us. Those days had appeared

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two ages to me : and his absence, combined with the uneasiness of our situation, and the state of my mother's health, depressed my spirits, and I sought to sooth them by music. A little melancholy air, which I often sung to Montgomery, was before me, it expressed my feelings: and I was lost in the pleasure of expressing them, when the door from the garden opened, and lord Pevensey stalked, in his formal manner, into the room.

I arose instantly from my seat; but he took my hand, and, with an air of familiarity, bade me set down again. Then drawing a chair close to me, he looked in my face, and cried—"Sweet Caroline! she will not refuse to sing to me! She does not hate me, and will perhaps be the lovely mediatrix who shall adjust all differences between me and her mamma."

I cannot describe what I felt at that moment. The monster endeavoured to argue with me; but, incapable of hearing, I tried only to escape from him, when the door was broke open with great force, and Montgomery burst into the room; he flew at lord Pevensey, whom he pinioned in a moment to the wainscot, but seeing me to all appearance dying on the floor, where I had fallen, he quitted his adversary, and came to raise and re-assure me. Lord Pevensey took this opportunity of departing; and we were recalled from the delightful avowal of mutual passion, by a message from my mother, whose servants had indiscreetly told her what they knew of the affair.

A few days after lord Pevensey's visit, my mother, whose health had been visibly declining; called me to her bedside, and I embraced that opportunity of acquainting her of the declarations of Montgomery. "Yes, my dear child," said she, "in his virtues you will realize a fortune, and in his honour and courage protection." Montgomery therefore procured a clergyman of the church of England, who married us in her presence, and, to our great grief, about a fortnight after my mother expired. Her death, though

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we had long expected it, yet threw me into a state of languor and dejection, from which I was roused, by hearing that lord Pevensey, who had quitted France immediately after his disgraceful dismissal from the house, was returned, and had determined to pursue, with all the eagerness that rage and hatred could inspire, the process by which he hoped to deprive me and my brothers of our legacies. Nor was this all, the personal affront he had received from Montgomery he could not bear, and he sent him a challenge, which Montgomery accepted; but, to evade the laws in France against duelling, the place where they were to meet was fixed in the dominions of the pope. Anxious to conceal this from me, Montgomery found a pretence for his journey, and Providence yet preserved him. He dangerously wounded his adversary, and returned himself to me in safety, and a few days afterwards we received from lord Pevensey, who believed himself dying, an acknowledgment of the justice of my brothers' claims to the provision made for them by their father, and an order to his procurer at Paris to put an end to every suit depending against us.

A war was now raging with great violence between France and England, and the regiment, in which Montgomery had a company, was ordered into Germany. I was determined to accompany him; at first, his fears for my safety made him resist my importunities, but at length he consented, and I followed him residing wherever he was encamped; and however horrid the scenes were to which I thus became a witness, I feared nothing but for his life.

In a small village on the banks of the Weser, near the camp of Mareschal de Conrades, my dear Charles was born: but he had not above six weeks blessed my eyes, and those of his doting father, before that father went out to the fatal field of Minden. The English were victors, and the servant, who had long attended on Montgomery, had only time to tell me that he fell at the head of his company;

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his arm broken by a musket shot, and receiving a thrust from a bayonet in the breast. That with a party of soldiers, he had attempted to bring his master off the field, but they had been compelled to abandon the enterprize. The English took possession of the village where I was, but, fortunately for me, a young officer entered the house where I remained with my infant in my arms. I demanded his protection, which he instantly granted, and gave me a corporal's guard. The stupor of my grief being thus shaken off for a moment, I recollected that if I suffered my myself to sink, my boy, deprived of the nourishment which sustained him, would perish miserably. I took the sustenance my servants offered me; my mind dwelling on a plan I had formed to avail myself of the generosity of the English officer, and to engage him to assist me in the finding of Montgomery, whether living or dead. It was late before this officer returned to me. He seemed amazed at my design, and represented, in strong terms, the terrifying circumstances attendant on such an undertaking; but finding I was determined on the pursuit, he generously resolved to accompany me.

With my little boy in my arms, for I refused to leave him, I went forth on this dreadful errand; living bodies, covered with ghastly wounds, from whom the wretches who follow camps, were stripping their bloody garments, affected me with such a sensation of sick horror, that I was frequently on the point of fainting. We traversed the bloody field, till my search seemed to be at length desperate, and my protector, entreated me to consider that by longer perseverance, I should injure my own health, and perhaps destroy my child, without the possibility of being of the least use to the lost object of my affection. The moon shone with great lustre, and just as he had agreed to indulge me with ten minutes longer, the rays of the moon fell on something white, which glittered extremely. An impulse made me suddenly catch it up, it

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was part of the sleeve of a shirt, and in it was a button set with brilliants, that had once belonged to lord Pevensey, and which, as the diamonds surrounded a cypher, formed of her hair, had been given to Montgomery. This well known memorial, though it convinced me of his death, yet revived the wretched hopes of finding his body, and animated by this melancholy certainty, I more narrowly examined every ghastly countenance near the spot, and at length, half concealed by the blood that had flowed from his arm, which which was thrown across his face, I discovered those well known features so dear to my agonized heart. I threw myself on the ground, and in the wildness of my phrenzy, protested that I would remain and perish with my infant by the side of my husband. The young officer bore with my extravagance, and with the most patient pity, attempted to sooth and appease me, by calling off my thoughts to the attention due to my child. But a new idea had now struck me, I insisted upon it that my Montgomery was not dead, and that I felt his heart palpitate. My generous friend, in compliance to my entreaties, enquired into the reality of my hopes, and fancied that he also found a slight pulse in the heart, and to satisfy me, he directed the guard that followed us, to carry the body to the village from whence we came. The body was no sooner placed on a bed in the room I inhabited, than with the assistance of the French maid, who attended me, I washed the blood from the various wounds he had received, and imagine my transports, when the surgeon, who soon after arrived, declared that Montgomery was not dead ! far, however, was he from pronouncing that he would recover. It was full a week before Montgomery recovered his recollection, and knew me, and his boy : he continued however to mend, and at the end of five months, having procured his exchange, we returned to Paris. The extraordinary circumstance of his escape from death, as well as his great military merit, procured him the no-

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tice of the king of France ; who gave him, with a pension, the cross of St. Louis.

We now seemed to have nothing left to wish for, and some years did indeed pass, during which my felicity could hardly admit of increase, when a sudden illness deprived me of the most beloved of husbands. As at his death great part of his income ceased, I tried to procure a commission for my son in the army, but after many months of fatiguing and incessant applications, I quitted France, and went to my own relations in Scotland, till I could procure a cottage in which I have ever since lived with my son, regretting nothing but that his talents and virtues are lost to society.



THE

NEGRO.

AN AFFECTING TALE.

DEEP in the covert of a forest, on the coast of Guinea, my father's cot was situate : retirement blessed our home and the surrounding scene ; the rising sun but brightened to our happiness, and threw its last rays on our peaceful repose. We employed ourselves alternately in the chase and in cultivating those few productions which we thought necessary to court from the hand of nature, who, though smiling and serene in the surrounding woods, was oft times turbulent and boisterous on the shelving shore.

It was on one of those tempestuous nights, when the fury of the winds was not solely confined to the sea, that we were awakened from our slumber by the increasing jar of the elements : we ventured to put forth our heads, and found the woods much agitated by the conflict, the noise of which struck terror to our hearts : it was near proving fatal to an only sister, for she, poor girl, though of the sable colour of her brother, possessed a mind as innocent as it was timorous. We, however, watched till morning

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and, as it was an accident sometimes occurred, we betook ourselves to the sea-side, where the havoc of the night presented to our eyes the remains of a vessel, which had bulged against a rock.

Although in hopes of being enabled to have assisted any unfortunate mariner chance might have saved from the wreck, we were near quitting the yet turbulent scene, when the groans of a human being struck upon our ears: we attentively watched from whence it came, and soon after we discovered a poor white man, the waters had washed to the cavity of a rock. We lost no time in conveying him to our hut, where our attentions, aided by the more assiduous care of my sister, soon restored the white man completely to himself.

But, alas! from hence have I to date all the misfortunes of myself and family. Ill-fated meeting! Why did not the angry waves swallow up this man also—why should they again resign him to the earth, saved but to disgrace it? In a short time I found he had gained an interest in Lilla's heart: she, poor girl, was not proof against the wiles of a man born to be the disturber of her repose, and she withheld not aught from him that could gratify his disposition, the effects of which were but too soon visible in her person.

Even here all things might have been well: we united them by those few ceremonies which the simplicity of our lives alone demanded; and we assisted the new-married couple in forming an habitation for themselves. The happiness of Lilla, however, lasted not long: the novelty of this mode of life had lost its charms in the estimation of the white man, and he no longer regarded her with that seeming attention and fondness, which I have since seen so often take place of reality. From indifference he proceeded to ill usage; and probably, he deemed it his greatest misfortune to be united to a girl of a colour diametrically opposite to his own; but in her sable bosom dwelt that

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simplicity and good nature, not always to be met with in that of the white man: in her's there was in truth no guile—in his was implanted deceit, cruelty,—nay, worse, ingratitude.

At this time the white man frequently visited the seaside, where he would set for hours, watching incessantly those billows that had borne him from his brethren: it was in one of those moods that Lilla ventured to chide his absence from his home, from his children, from herself; the demon of despair had taken possession of him, and he sought the life of her who had saved his own. Fleeing from the rage of her ungrateful husband, she sought the refuge of our cottage. I alone was there when the bleeding form of my sister presented itself before me, and my passions were roused to madness. At this moment the infuriated white man approached our door, still in pursuit of the unfortunate Lilla; and my angry feelings getting the better of my disposition, I aimed an unsuccessful blow at the head of the pursuer. I saw him no more; and a short time convinced us he had fled the territory of our tribe entirely, as our repeated inquiries could not find him out.

We were already beginning to forget such a person had existed (who would long ere that have been cast into oblivion, had not the pledges of his former attachment continually crossed my Lilla's view) when one morning we were surprized on being summoned by our tribe to a council, which was to be held ere the commencement of an approaching war. A nation, which inhabited a distant part of our country, coveted the fields and possessions which contributed at once to our repose and nourishment, and they hesitated not to demand a share in our native lands: a battle ensued, in the midst of which I had the horror to behold the former disturber of our peace. This rencounter, and the event of the day, left me no room to doubt that he was the chief instigator of the combat: a combat,

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that proved fatal to me and all that I held dear—for in that day I lost my aged parent, and my not less regretted sister, who fain would follow to the field those whom nature had allied to her.

Dreadful was the carnage of that day, as not even the children of their Lilla escaped, who in vain sought refuge in their mother's arms; and she herself received her death from the hands of her husband! I alone escaped, like the blighted plantain of the forest. Ere long, some hundreds of my brethren were, with myself, conveyed to the sea-side, where a vessel, as capacious as it was loathsome, bore us away for ever from our native land.

After tossing about for many weeks on the briny element, we were at length conveyed to some distant plantations, barely alive. Alas! why should I have escaped among the few who survived that sickening voyage? Why enabled to undergo the cruelty and severity which daily marked our lives?—But this is beyond thought, and poor Sambo bows with submission to his fate.

I will not shock your ears by a repetition of the sanguinary scenes which too place during my unfortunate captivity; they would make humanity shudder, and increase those tears which your tender hearts have already poured forth. Ever awake to my degraded situation, and to the hope of one day regaining my liberty, I only waited a convenient opportunity to effect it, which soon presented itself.

The owner of the plantation to which I was so unfortunately attached, was the same white man saved by my family, and united to my sister. I found that he had embarked in one of his own ships to procure slaves on the coast of Africa, which, however, by angry heaven, was not for that time permitted, as I have already related. Meeting afterwards with some of his countrymen on a different part of the coast, he joined with them in setting two tribes at war, and, succeeding in his diabolical scheme,

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he purchased the prisoners made from our side, and conveyed them away.

It was on a similar scheme he embarked me and several other slaves on board one of his ships. In a fortunate moment however, when our cruel master and the white men were asleep, we embraced the opportunity, and aided each other in breaking our chains. Surprised in their slumbers, they knew not how to make resistance, and we were soon masters of the ship. My fellow-slaves hesitated not immediately to commit our master to the roaring abyss beneath, where his life and his crimes were at once terminated. Trusting to the winds, we soon reached this shore, where we stranded the vessel, and sought refuge in the country, not, however, without first liberating our prisoners.

FINIS.





